Accountability Report

2015–2016

Municipal Affairs

NOVA SCOTIA

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Accountability Statement

The Accountability Report of the Department of Municipal Affairs for the year ended March 31, 2016 is prepared pursuant to the *Finance Act* and government policies and guidelines. These authorities require the reporting of outcomes against the department's Statement of Mandate for the fiscal year just ended. The reporting of the department's outcomes necessarily includes estimates, judgments and opinions by department management.

We acknowledge that this Accountability Report is the responsibility of the Department of Municipal Affairs management. The report is, to the extent possible, a complete and accurate representation of outcomes relative to the goals and priorities set out in the 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate for the Department of Municipal Affairs.

Original signed by

Honourable Zach Churchill
Minister

Original signed by

Kelliann Dean
Deputy Minister

Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

We are pleased to present the Accountability Report for the Department of Municipal Affairs for April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. This report highlights last year's progress in meeting the priorities of the Government of Nova Scotia as well as the department's Statement of Mandate.

Programs and services are provided by Policy, Planning and Advisory Services, Grants, Programs and Operations (including the Office of the Fire Marshal) and the Emergency Management Office (EMO). With a wide variety of programs and services, the department is committed to supporting municipalities to ensure healthy, safe and vibrant communities.

Municipal Affairs supports governance and structural reform by assisting municipalities that are committed to a process of re-structuring. We work hard to strengthen provincial-municipal relationships with our stakeholders, including, the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities and the Association of Municipal Administrators, Nova Scotia. Regional Enterprise Networks provide regional economic leadership and develop regional economic strategies, while supporting small, local businesses. Throughout this past year, we have coordinated with other government departments and crown corporations to enhance the work of these important organizations. In addition, in alignment with the One NS Report, we have enhanced land use planning to support economic development in communities across the province. We have also facilitated access to maximize federal funding for municipalities and infrastructure improvements, which have broad public benefits and contribute to long-term economic growth and prosperity.

In 2015/16, highlights of Municipal Affairs' achievements include:

- assisting municipalities seeking structural change through technical support, advice and counsel and financial supports;
- working with the Springtide Collective, a non-profit group, on a project to encourage Nova Scotians to get involved in local government;
- amending the *Municipal Elections Act* to make it easier to vote in municipal and school board elections;
- amending the *Municipal Government Act* to prevent the creation of new towns or villages in the province;
- funding 12 new projects under the *Nova Scotia Transit Research Incentive Program;*

- providing funding to the *Accessible Transportation Assistance Program; and*
- helping to ensure the well-being of Nova Scotians by encouraging fire safety through a number of events throughout the year.

Our dedicated staff continue to work diligently to serve municipalities and Nova Scotians. They are committed to making sure programs and services are responsive to the needs of Nova Scotians.

Our department looks forward to another successful year working on behalf of Nova Scotians.

Original signed by

Honourable Zach Churchill
Minister

Original signed by

Kelliann Dean
Deputy Minister

Financial results

Municipal Affairs		
	2015-2016 Estimate	2015-2016 Actual
Program and Service Area	($thousands)	($thousands)
Senior Management	669	609
Grants, Programs and Operations	152,763	144,186
Policy, Planning and Advisory Services	7,582	7,725
Emergency Management Office	6,460	6,280
Total Program Expenses	**167,474**	**158,800**
Ordinary Revenue	(2)	(7)
Ordinary Recoveries	(100,249)	(98,247)
Total Revenues	**(100,251)**	**(98,254)**
TCA Purchase Requirements	679	407
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	72.2	66.1

VARIANCE EXPLANATIONS

Total Program Expenses

Department of Municipal Affairs' expenditures were $8.7 million, 5 per cent lower than estimate primarily due to underspending in the following areas: $7.1 million as a result of project delays (New Build Canada Fund - National and Regional Projects $4.2 million, and Small Communities Fund $2.9 million of which $1.5 million was recoverable from the Federal Government); $1.5 million throughout other municipal grant programs; and

$0.1 million due to temporary staff vacancies and general operating savings.

Total Revenues
Department of Municipal Affairs' revenues were $2 million (2 per cent) lower than estimate, primarily due to reduced Government of Canada grants related to NBCF Small Communities Component Grant of $1.5 million, as a result of project delays.

TCA Expenditure Analysis
TCA expenditures were lower than planned by $271,000 due to under spending in EMO, and project delays in the Municipal Data Management System. This was offset by a new Fire Database Management system for the Office of the Fire Marshal.

Funded Staff
Delays in filling vacancies account for lower than expected (6.1) FTE's.

Measuring our performance

Statement of Mandate:

The Department of Municipal Affairs (DMA) values the vital role municipalities play in building a strong, vibrant Nova Scotia. From supporting sound governance, to delivering a broad range of municipal services, to protecting Nova Scotians in times of emergency, the department is committed to supporting our municipalities to ensure healthy, safe and vibrant communities. Programs and services are provided by Policy, Planning and Advisory Services, Grants Programs and Operations (the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) and the Emergency Management Office (EMO). Most of these responsibilities are fulfilled through the ongoing services and programs that are delivered by the DMA's core business areas.

Overview:

The Honourable Zach Churchill serves as Minister of the Department of Municipal Affairs ("the Department"). Dan McDougall was Deputy Minister for Municipal Affairs for the duration of this Report (year ending March 31, 2016). Kelliann Dean has since been appointed Deputy Minister.

In the Department's 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate, six priorities and initiatives were identified. They were as follows:

1. Support governance and structural reform by developing a program that provides financial support for municipalities that are committed to a process of re-structuring whether through amalgamation or dissolution.

2. Enhance land use planning to support economic development through implementing land use planning as a component of Goal 17 from the One NS Report.

3. Develop and sign a partnership agreement with UNSM that sets the future direction of priorities for the province and municipalities with respect to inter-governmental responsibilities and commitments going forward.

4. Collaborate and engage with our stakeholders to ensure policies, programs and services encourage and support vibrant, safe, and healthy communities.

5. Educate, train and provide advisory services to enhance the capabilities of partners, stakeholders and citizens.

6. Enhance intergovernmental relations to simplifying how to make it easier for municipalities to interact with the provincial government.

Looking at the Department's mandate and the respective priorities, the Department identified three outcomes to be measured:

- Healthy vibrant municipal communities with sound governance structures, authority and financial sustainability;

- High quality emergency management capacity at the community and provincial level; and,

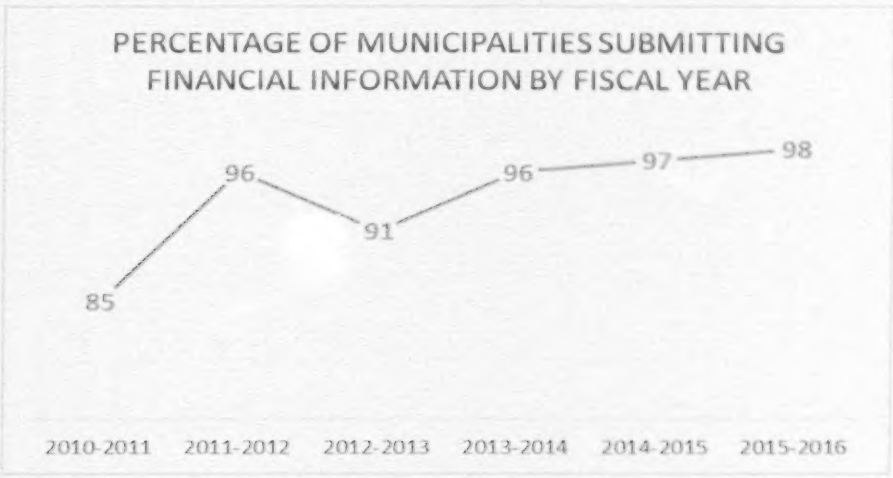
- Effective and collaborative fire prevention programs and services.

Outcome: Healthy vibrant municipal communities with sound governance structures, authority and financial sustainability.

Description:

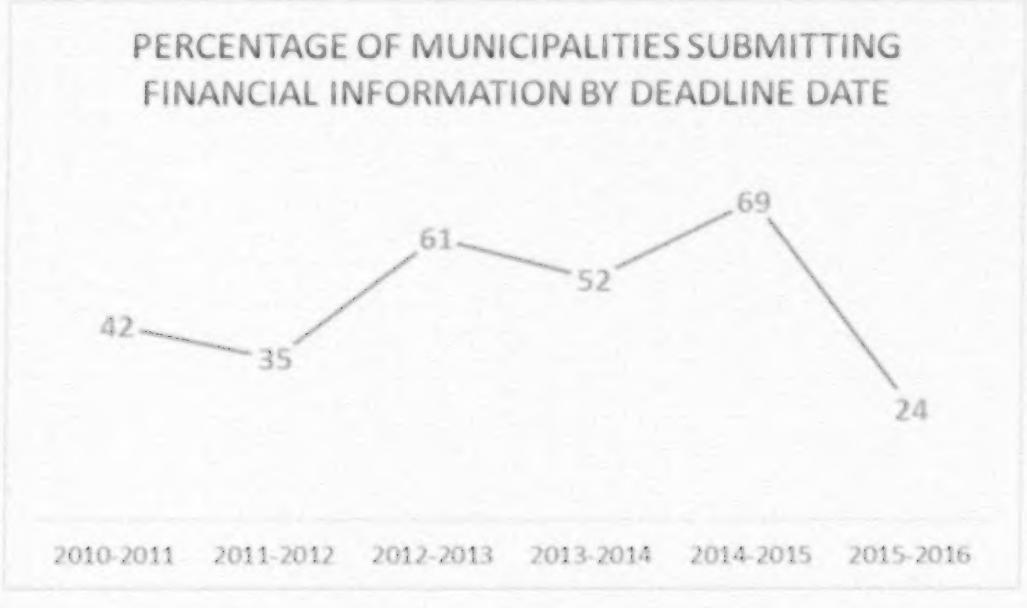
Outcome(s)	Annual Priorities	Measure	Data/ Base Year	TARGET for 2015-16	Long-term Target	Trends
Healthy vibrant municipal communities with sound governance structures, authority and financial sustainability	Monitor the financial health of Municipalities using the Financial Conditions Index	Number of Municipalities with 6 or more "red" indicators in the FCI over a period of 3 years 2011-12	2011-12-9	Municipalities with 6 or more "red" indicators have an Action Plan	Less than 5 Municipal Units in jeopardy	10 in 2011-12 6 in 2012-13 6 in 2013-14 5 in 2014-15

Timely and consistent reporting by municipalities facilitates the department's ability to better understand individual municipal context and informs future decisions in terms of better prioritization as well as grant and program design. In the past six years, the reporting rate of municipalities' submissions has improved. The department is two percent (1 municipal unit) away from meeting its target of 100 per cent municipal reporting by the end of the 2015-2016 fiscal year.



However, the timeliness of reporting is important and still a concern. If information is not reported within a reasonable time, it declines its relevance. As depicted in the graph below only 24% reporting per cent of municipalities are submitting their information by the requested date. Over three quarters of the municipalities did not submit their requested information by the deadline Sept 30th. The majority (76%) are received within a month after the deadline.

We are confident this will improve over the next year or two as we work towards improvements to our Municipal Reporting System (MRS). We have secured TCA funding and a project is well underway to improve efficiencies for both the province and municipalities in terms of financial reporting. We have also engaged municipalities as part of this process.



Outcome: High quality emergency management capacity at the community and provincial level.

Description: To provide municipalities with a more contextual and comprehensive understanding of their level of community resilience.

Emergency Management is the responsibility of everyone. It begins at the individual level and expands to the family, the neighbourhood, the community, the municipality, the province or territory and finally, the country. As a provincial entity, the Emergency Management Office (EMO) has traditionally focused on the delivery of training to municipal officials to increase capacity to prepare, plan and manage emergency events.

This past year, EMO developed a revised assessment tool in close consultation with municipalities for reviewing municipal emergency plans required under the *Emergency Management Act*. The assessment tool's scoring process is designed to help municipalities better understand the risks they have identified, prevention and mitigation strategies to address the identified risks, the importance of testing their plan, and the capacity needed to manage in the event the risk becomes a reality.

The scoring of these municipal plans will enable EMO staff to have an informed discussion with individual municipal representatives to enhance their respective plans as well as their level of emergency preparedness. Taken together, these plans provide EMO with a baseline of information needed to inform the development of complementary approaches and tools to further enhance emergency preparedness for the province.

Outcome: Effective and collaborative fire prevention programs and services.

Description: The Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) continued to work with stakeholders to identify a platform to share common issues within municipal fire services and to improve collaboration and communication on fire service issues.

The OFM worked with the Nova Scotia Building Code Training & Certification Board and Nova Scotia Building Officials Association to implement the recommendations of the Working Group on Code Education for Building Officials. This work relates to transferring the responsibility for the oversight and administration to these two entities effective April 1, 2017. Staff continued to implement training and conducted the following educational programs: Remembering When, TAPP-C (5 sessions, 5 participants), Learn Not to Burn, Fire and Life Safety (88 sessions, 1216 participants), Local Assistant (4 sessions, 86 participants).

We have continued with training commitments and have conducted the following educational programs:

Training Module	Number of Sessions	Number of Participants
Remembering When	n/a	n/a
TAPP-C	5	5
Learn Not to Burn, Fire and Life Safety	88	1216
Local Assistant	4	86

These programs place a renewed emphasis on public awareness and educate our partners and stakeholders on fire safety whether they need to enhance their skills in their work setting to educating children (preschool to grade 1) on fire safety programs as developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

These fire safety education programs are delivered in partnership with the Departments of Justice, Health & Wellness, Community Services, Education & Early Childhood Development, Nova Scotia Health Authority, police and fire services.

The OFM continued to review the building official training curriculum to ensure that it is relevant to current code requirements and coordinated training with the building officials association as well as several municipalities.

Appendix A

Annual Report under Section 18 of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act*

The Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act was proclaimed into law on December 20, 2011.

The Act provides for government employees to be able to come forward if they reasonably believe that a wrongdoing has been committed or is about to be committed and they are acting in good faith.

The Act also protects employees who do disclose from reprisals, by enabling them to lay a complaint of reprisal with the Labor Board.

A wrongdoing for the purposes of the Act is:

a) a contravention of provincial or federal laws or regulations
b) a misuse or gross mismanagement of public funds or assets
c) an act or omission that creates an imminent risk of a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment, or
d) directing or counselling someone to commit a wrongdoing

The following is a summary of disclosures received by the Department of Municipal Affairs

Information Required under Section18 of the Act	**Fiscal Year 2015-2016**
The number of disclosures received	0
The number of findings of wrongdoing	0
Details of each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A
Recommendations and actions taken on each wrongdoing (insert separate row for each wrongdoing)	N/A

There were no Disclosures of Wrongdoing received by the Department of Municipal Affairs in 2015-16.